



HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 03.24.2006

HFD REMINDS CITIZENS HEATERS NEED SPACE AND CARE

As the temperature drops into the 30s (as forecasted by the National Weather Service), the fire department urges citizens to be careful and follow some simple safety tips when using space heaters and other supplemental heating sources. Any shift away from the exclusive use of central heating presents an increased possibility for fire.

On Thursday, March 23, 2006, a Houston house fire was caused by a heating source and resulted in heavy damage. Heating devices cause more than 100 fires in the City of Houston each year, resulting in numerous injuries and possible death.

Citizens should always keep in mind that: Space Heaters Need Space!

The Houston Fire Department recommends the following safety tips when using supplemental heating sources:

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm.
- Never leave children unattended in a room with a space heater - Children knock over space heaters especially if they are placed on top of wobbly tables or stools and near where the children play. Children may also stick paper or toys in the grates of the space heaters especially gas space heaters. The city had two reported fires in 2004 caused by children playing with space heaters.
- Keep all combustible materials, including yourself at least 3 feet from the heater
- Open face heaters should have a screen
- Provide ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

Vented Gas / Fired Heating Appliances Tips - Central heating units, floor furnaces, recessed wall heaters, and vented space heaters.

- Inspect annually by a qualified service technician. Don't wait for cold weather!
- Do not use these type units without a proper vent pipe. Vent pipes must exhaust to the outside!
- If your flame is not blue, it is not burning properly. It is producing Carbon Monoxide, which can't be seen, smelled or tasted. Turn it off.

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HEATER SAFETY, PG 2

- Use flexible metal tubing with threaded ends to connect the heater to the gas valve. There should be a cutoff valve for the heater at the wall. Never use a rubber hose to connect a space heater to the gas valve!
- Use soapy water to check all connections and valves for leaks. NEVER use a match to test for a gas leak!
- Look for the American Gas Association label and follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper usage.

Electric Heaters Tips

- Never overload outlets or breakers.
- Don't use extension cords for the heater. If the cord is hot to the touch, turn off the heater and unplug it!
- Electric heaters permanently installed in the wall or ceiling should have lint and dust removed regularly. Lint and dust will burn!

These and other safety tips may be found on the HFD website at www.houstontx.gov/fire